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—Est quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris.
LUCAN.

When the eye of the spectator, who views the fictions of days that are past, rests on the rites and ceremonies that were performed in classic temples, amid all the grandeur of Doric columns the solemnizing influence of antiquity, the glorious blaze of fancy and of taste, he cannot but turn with a dissatisfaction bordering on disgust, from the imposing scenery round him, as he reflects on the absurdity of worship directed in such uncertain, interfering and multitudinous streams, to such an infinity of objects.

The design of the present essay, is in no respect novel – the execution by no means untried, and the facts and principles are generally known. But it can never be a useless attempt, to contribute one grain to the monument of evidence, which rescues the hallowed institutions of old, from the charge of folly and the imputation of absurdity.

Polytheism in its broadest meaning, startles the wildest savage. We lay down the principle at once, deny all exceptions and challenge all proof to the contrary. That there should be from the beginni more than one creator spirit, or yet more inconsisten divers directly opposite and warring, and almighty principles, is a position from which the most untutored reason revolts.

With corroborating facts we shall at presen have little to do. But one or two may be introdu which certainly do every thing but confute the ide just suggested. With the Indian mythology, we candidly confess we are but slightly acquainted. Neith do we believe that Mr Southey, whose imaginatio of fire has illuminated his course, through that mighty labyrinth of incongruities, could give any rational or systematic account of it himself. We do not believe that the priests of that religion the Indian caballists, have any key to unlo the ridiculous arcana which they propagate - Let us therefore paſs this system over, if it be worthy of that name, as no fair inferences could be deduced therefrom. And first did the ancient Egyptians, of whose religious belief we have already treated in the course of our lucubrations, did they believe in more than one God, who had all the attributes of omnipotence? They did not maintain any such doctrine. Osiris was their Supreme being - by his influence the earth was made fruitful, who was herself but a secondary deity - and he was more powerful than Typhon, the evil spirit of their creed. We must yield the point however, that they actually did believe in a plurality of Gods - which we do not mean to concede with respect to the enlightened Greeks and Romans - Leaving the Parent of claſsic mythology, we descend to the wild traditions of our American Aborigines - They all adore one great spirit - one being of superior majesty and supreme power - They believe also in an evil spirit, whose wrath they deprecate by sacrifice and oblations; - but allow him a power far more circumscribed than the good deity against whom he wars. -

But enough of this; - we perceive we have only been labouring to prove a point acknowledged by all. The origin of the Grecian Mythology is

with much plausibility deduced, from the narrati
of scripture. Saturn is said to be Noah, Jupiter
his son Ham. Plato affirmed that Saturn was
the son of Oceanus and Thetis, which may very
easily be considered as the poetical account of
Noah's coming forth from the ark amid the
desolation of life, the patriarch of the earth &
~~the~~ temporal lord —

There are two lights in which we
may contemplate this system. The one, corporeal
if we may so express ourselves, the other philosoph-
-ical or metaphysical. The first, the worship of
a person, who actually had existed, or was supposed to
have existed, as a mighty warrior for the God of war
the discoverer of a useful art, or first applier of a
common element for useful purposes, as the God
of wisdom or of fire. In the second light, we m
consider the Gods of antiquity as the personifica-
-tions of their respective attributes.

The characters of priest and poet, were in
some measure identified, in former days, as the
indiscriminate application of their name, vat

would lead us to conjecture, had we no other proof on the subject. The poets have most contributed to confuse the philosophy of Grecian mythology, if any it had. They have jumbled together tradition and fiction they have combined the exaggerated accounts of the former with their own wild inventions, and have mingled in one composition and portrayed in the same picture, historical characters and shadowy personifications.

Without diving therefore into these now obscure speculations, we shall briefly attempt to shew, that in either of the lights just mentioned, the Greeks may be vindicated from the aspersion, not merely of downright polytheism, or of worshipping many Almighties, but from that of worshipping more Gods than one, in any other manner than that, in which Christians worship at the present day.

We will not repeat the observations which we made in a former number+, on a subject connected with the present. But the mind lost in the contemplation of God, in the capacity of all his collected attributes, dwells on that one which is the more immediate object of its thoughts, and by the exertion of which, it seeks for assistance. Hence the strong hold which the Roman Catholic religion takes on the feelings and the imagination. They borrow assistance in their prayers, even from mortal beauty.

+ seventeenth

The virgin mother occupies a very large portion of their worship;- the fire enkindled at the shrine of mortal beauty, purified and glorified in the font of eternal ~~glory~~ light, lends an unusual fervour to their devotion. They worship in common with other denominations, the persons of the trinity separately - They bend the knee before paintings of the virgin and the saviour, and adore at the shrines of saints and angels. But is it not unfair to accuse that church, whose origin and long antiquity must every claim our reverential respect, either of polytheism or idolatry?

Examine then the parallel between their creed and that of the Greeks. But first reject the crudities of the latter. They worshipped it is true, the personifications of passions, dangerous in their nature and often pernicious in their tendency; as for instance the queen of beauty and the god of love - But are we to suppose, either that, apart from poetic fiction, they considered the passions in all their original purity and beauty, or that the primeval deification of these persons or principles, shadowed forth no sensual appetite whatever, but the harmony and moral perfection of the universe - the exquisite spirit which fills the earth with joy, and gives to the breath of life, its fire, ~~its~~ longing for pleasure and its capacity for enjoyment - We

are again wandering. To return. The Greeks it is
true gave all the objects of their worship, the appel
:lation of θεο. If this alone is to damn their credit
for the exercise of reason, let us ask; what is our
object of worship? Is the homage paid to a being,
whose natural energies are not superior to our ow
Worship? Worship is fealty of a higher order – and then
the question comes home irresistibly, as that worship
must be to God, are not the Roman Catholics poly
-theists, with all the objects of their devotion, with thei
eleven thousand canonized virgins, their sancti maj
-ses and sancti minores, whose rural images, and cou
-less shrines exceed in number all the deities of Olymp
and all the Fauns and Naiads that peopled the
groves and streams of antiquity. In the first ligh
which we mentioned, and in which we are now conside
-ring the subject; the wise ancients looked through
the minor deities, at Jove the father of Gods and of
men. And when we read of the insufficiency of
his power, of the manner in which his designs were
so often thwarted, let us turn to our own scriptures
of truth. God repented that he had made man. He
is said to have repented of many things. By which we
are to understand, that man left to his own mo:
:ral agency, indispensable to moral obligation,
perversely resisted the designs of infinite wisdom
and the principles of good implanted in his heart.

we will not for a moment compare our own holy religion with the dark superstitions of Noah's posterity - But here the divine attributes of foreknowledge and omnipotence, to use the only terms our language affords, may be said to be at variance - Wider scope, for wider must be allowed the unenlightened and allegorising poets of antiquity - - we leave conclusions to the reader's own judgment - Finally, on this part of our subject, we believe the rabble of Pagan worshippers, to be entitled as it regards the comprehension of their own system, to be on a par with the rabble of another creed, which we have been comparing with theirs -

The founders then of this fanciful religion, the sages whose depth of penetration shewed that they could not have bowed before more than one supreme, while they revered their own ancient institutions and joined with their country in worshipping the national Gods, should seem from reason, surely to have believed in but one primal cause of existence - one God, mysterious and impenetrable, to the ken of finite beings, who moved in a sphere of glorious accidents and attributes, so many rays diverging from the uncreated essence which they contemplated separately, and thus looked at the fountain of life and light and matter.

If the inferior Gods & Goddesses were any thing more than ministering spirits in the eyes of Greece, Homer takes certainly as much liberty with them all, as would have startled the consciences of the Hottentots. But from Homer we learn, that Jupiter had the general superintendence of the heavens & the earth but his peculiar care was employed in the regions of the Clouds, in directing their movements and letting off the thunderbolts. It would be going too far perhaps, to ~~infer~~. In fact, he was the atmosphere, the breath of life. Jove often stands for, & represents the air in Homer. This was certainly conceiving no mean idea of the Supreme Essence, in which we live & move and have our being. Again, while the smaller fry of Olympus are constantly intermeddling with mankind and making their appearances till they became personally acquainted with the best Fellows in the Grecian & Trojan armies, Jove preserving a more dignified conduct, he veils himself among the mists of Ida. His messenger executes his commissions & makes his revelations by dreams & visions. Finally, we learn from Homer, that all the other celestial tenants uniting their strengths, were of no weight in the hands of the thunderer. Jupiter himself was subject to fate.

Much to the same purpose are Pindar Apollonius Rhodius and others. But we hasten to the main point, the opinion of the philosophers. Their conceptions of Deity should appea to be different from either of those mentioned. They did not believe in the persons in human shape of the Gods - either as deified men, or personified attributes, but gave the names to the different elements, essences & principles which they supposed made the machinery of the universe. Seneca said, we might give Jupiter all the names, which may represent effects of which he was the cause. This attributes supreme sovereignty to Jupiter in the train o consequents. But we have thought proper to throw our thoughts on this subject into ve and let the reader rest, by using stilts instea of that of dull dog trot in which we have so long been ambling. As William Lith

-gow, the most quizzical or else the greatest fool of a traveller, that ever wrote, says, "the damnable deceit of my Janizary, my muse can better express than my sorrowful prose." The following Ode to the Ancient Mythology is founded on the authority of Cicero, in his book on the nature of the Gods. See also the French Anas, among the Furetieriana –

ANCIENT MYTHOLOGY.

I.

Thou! soul of thought – & tongue of fire!
Whether thou art th' eternal font of flame,
Or from that font thy quick'ning impulse came;
That burns within me & in whom I am, –
Where language lies, my wilder'd notes inspire!
Thou all absorbing in thy soul intense,
The heart of numbers & the life of sense,
Who may thy mystic modes, profane, rehearse?
Below the earth, beyond the sapphire skies,
Detect thy uncreated energies,
Soul of the universe!

II

Who strung the lyre of heaven, & swept its strings
When chaos at the sound from slumber broke?—
How lifts the [illegible], the veil that darkness flings,
And to the sable warriors arms the springs,
What time within her breast, the undying fire awoke!"

III

The Infinite is full of thee,
And thou art infinite!
The perfect essence of immensity,
Immensity thyself — yet art thou free,
Its living warmth & light,
From gross co-union;— lord of time & space,
Eternity's dark bounds thy resting place,
DZEU-PATER! all in all! impervious to the sight!

IV.

Who on the passive element
Triumphant rode?
Night's shadowy ~~wings~~ pinions ~~veiling~~ veiling his intent,—
Mysterious God!
Who breath'd a spirit o'er the waste of waves
Thro' the still waters to their central caves,
To move — to flow — to swell — to climb the vault
Sprinkling the brow of heaven in their assault?
Life of every drop of ocean

With her tributary race,
Whitening crests in her commotion
Restless! thy abiding place, –
– And yet thou art
Of the ONE essence, but a part; –
Ray of omnipresent glory!
Great **POSEIDON**, parent hoary! –

V.

From the central caves of earth
Life's warm nurture genial pours,
Bursting verdure has its birth,
Autumn revels in her stores.
Gems that light the caverns dread,
Deep, concealed from mortal view,
Groves, whose everlasting head
Bathes in empyrean blue,
From the plain to mountain pride,
Down the valley's chequer'd side,
Cheerful tints of emerald ~~hue~~ hue, –
These, dark **PLUTO**! of thee tell,
Thou! their vital principle,
Spirit all immutable!

VI.

Black as thy halls of darkness, sable King!
Were this green earth & yon blue arch above!
But lo! tho' ethereal font, day's living spring
Bursts o'er their realms in tides of life & love!

Bound ye, fiery coursers fleet! .
Breathing in extatic day –
Through golden gates of morn your feet
Hold, impalpable your way.
Bath'd in light, immortal steeds!
High the glittering monarch speeds,
Zephyrs fan his glorious plumes,
Heaven opens as he comes!
Blooming, from her roseate bowers
In his selle of purest flame,
Danc'd the golden pinion'd hours
Round his pathway as he came.
–Myriad hues on earth are glowing,
Sparkles ocean's soften'd breast,
Heav'n there her arch of glory shewing –
Softer, warmer, purer flowing,
By a gentler breeze carest.
Thy subtle, scrutinizing spirit plays
Pervading – searching, matter – boundless space –
Dimples on ocean, laughs in every gale –
–All vivifying essence – blest,
PHOIBE-APOLLON – hail!

VII.

Fair smiles glad TERRA – heavenly breezes play,
Round the blue arch she tracks her glittering way
Celestial music breathes mysterious sound,
The concave trembles with th' extatic sound.
Majestic parent! say, what mystic force
Controls thy march, directs th' eternal course?
Heart of earth – her life of motion –

Who guid'st ~~the [illegible]~~ each circling atom ~~[illegible]~~ in its sweep,—
Man mounts the infinite's exalted steep
Where spirits giddy their high vigils keep,
Wondering, adoring, pays thee his devotion!
PAN! thy magic rivets closing
On the links of space & time,
Thou unseen by man, reposing
Guid'st his bark thro' seas sublime.
Hail great ubiquitary! Hail to thee,
Nature's mighty sympathy!

VIII.

Yet again—
The bonds of sluggish matter burst away—
Fire the heart & cool the brain—
Bid thews and sinew lordly will obey.
The eagle flaps his iron pinion
Daring dazzling day's dominion;
Thundering o'er the desert waste
Hath the monarch lion past;—
Spurns the snorting steed the plain
Flinging on the breeze his main;—
Forg'd in depths of giant hill
Gleams the adamantine steel,
Vivid lightnings hath it shed
Round the warrior's crested head;
Wild their mingling descant soars
Where the thunder pealing roars!
Energy of limb and life!
Lord of wavering battle's strife!
ARES! God of victory,
Peals that descant wild to thee!

IX.

Tame them – in their fury tame –
Quench the death-announcing flame!
Why beats the pulse? why throbs the heart?
Why sinks the weapon from the mail-clad hand?
Coiling to spring – behold the lion start,
And scorch'd with fiercer fire, bound o'er the
glowing sand!
To some sequester'd cliff the eagle flies,
While milder lightnings seek the warrior's eyes –
Wild rapture floats in woodland melody,
Extatic music trembles in the sky –
Mute – wondering – longing – man the spirit feels,
That thro' each kindling vein unwonted steals –
Lo! from yonder shadowy grove
Beauty trips enclad with light!
Urchin CUPID! God of love!
Consecrate the hallow'd rite!

S.